RESEARCH REPORT

DEVELOPING CONSUMER INFORMATION ON SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY PLANNING

HEALTHY HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES SERIES

CMHC SCHL

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Canada

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Developing Consumer Information on Sustainable Community Planning

1999

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Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The transition to a more sustainable society is one of the most important issues facing Canadians today. The way communities are planned is a crucial factor. While information products on this topic have been directed toward housing-related professionals and builders, information targeted to consumers has been limited. However, as it is consumers who ultimately drive Canada's housing markets, they are a key audience to inform regarding sustainable community planning issues.

This report presents key considerations for the development, marketing and distribution of consumer-oriented information materials focussing on those community planning elements over which consumers have direct influence. This study was commissioned by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to determine a strategy for developing, marketing and distributing proposed products in this area, but the lessons learned from the research can be useful to other housing stakeholders.

Methodology

The information and conclusions are based on research consisting of:

- a literature review and six in-depth interviews to provide insight into key concerns and directions for the study;
- a full-day, brainstorming session with housing researchers to determine priority topic areas, goals, target audiences and five product concepts to be tested;
- 12 consumer focus groups held across Canada; and
- 30 in-depth interviews with potential clients/partners.

Conclusions

The time is right

Awareness of sustainable community planning issues is low among consumers. The environmental dimension of community planning is not clear to them. Neither are the benefits of sustainable communities. They are generally unaware that a range of sustainable housing options are already available and that they may already be putting into practice some aspects of sustainable communities. Many are under the impression that sustainable communities are an all-or-nothing package and that few examples currently exist. Further, there appears to be a lack of readily available information for consumers on many sustainable community planning issues, and consumers are receptive to receiving more information.

At the same time, many consumers find sustainable community planning to be an intriguing concept. Most, particularly urban dwellers, like at least some of the elements, though very few buy in to the complete package. Further, potential clients and partners generally believe that the time is right for introducing and promoting the range of topics covered under the umbrella of sustainable community planning.

Consumers are more receptive to some messages

Of the various sustainable community topics, sustainable landscaping sparks consumer interest the most. Not only are consumers particularly receptive to receiving information on this topic, they are also most ready to move on it now. Of the issues discussed, consumers appear to be the least receptive to compact communities. For many, the concept has negative associations such as increased parking, traffic and noise as well as loss of privacy. However, consumers were attracted to community features that would enable them to drive less and provide greater convenience and accessibility.

Focus on livability

Information on this topic should focus on *those aspects that make communities great places to live*. Great livability should be the one overriding impression that consumers are left with regarding these communities. Specifically, information materials should stress the human dimension of sustainable communities and the potential personal benefits that resonate most strongly with consumers: community interaction and dialogue with neighbours, access, convenience, safety, affordability, recreational opportunities and so forth. While the twin themes of environmental stewardship and legacy should be clearly addressed in the information materials, they should not be overly emphasized. Rather, they should be woven into, and build on, this overall message of great livability.

Finally, the information materials should also highlight the notion of options (and longevity) within the community, that is, that a variety of housing choices are available to accommodate the needs of a range of lifestyles and life cycles.

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INTRODUCTION

The transition to a more sustainable society is one of the most important issues facing Canadians today. The way communities are planned and designed is crucial to a more sustainable future because it can result in:

- lower municipal infrastructure costs;
- less reliance on cars;
- reduced levels of greenhouse gas emissions;
- more diverse and affordable housing and;
- protection of agricultural lands, recreational areas and natural habitat.

While information products on this topic have been directed toward housing-related professionals and builders, information targeted to consumers has been limited. Since they ultimately drive Canada's housing markets, consumers are a key audience to inform regarding sustainable community planning issues.

This report presents key considerations for the development, marketing and distribution of consumer-oriented information materials focussing on those community planning elements over which consumers have direct influence. This study was commissioned by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to develop a strategy for developing, marketing and distributing proposed products in this area, but the lessons learned from the research can be useful to other housing stakeholders.

To clarify which aspects of sustainable community planning to focus on, four key communication goals were set at a one-day brainstorming session of housing and community planning researchers, (see Chapter 4 for details).

- To increase the proportion of Canadians who take transportation-related issues into account when deciding where to live.

- To increase the proportion of Canadians who buy or rent their homes in mixed-use communities.

- To make Canadians more aware of, and knowledgeable about, the benefits of living in compact communities.

- To increase the proportion of Canadians practising sustainable landscaping techniques. This last goal was included because of the significant impacts that home landscaping can have on water and energy conservation, environmental protection, cost reduction and improving the quality of housing.

The information and conclusions of this study are based on research consisting of:

- a literature review and six in-depth interviews to provide insight into key concerns and directions for the study:
- a full-day, brainstorming session with housing researchers to determine priority topic areas, goals, target audiences and five product concepts to be tested[1];
- 12 consumer focus groups held across Canada; and
- 30 in-depth interviews with potential clients/partners.

2. REVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH

Background

Over 100 documents were scanned and 40 of these were selected for detailed review. The documents were identified on the basis of:

- six expert interviews;
- a bibliography supplied by CMHC;
- library searches (CMHC, Environment Canada, Inter-Governmental Committee on Urban and Regional Research); and
- Internet and database searches (Environmental Abstracts, WinSPIRS, general Web search).

This research approach provides a strong foundation for developing an information strategy, particularly for such a complex and poorly understood (at least by consumers) topic as sustainable community planning.

Key Findings

Visions include compact, mixed-use communities with stronger identity

The leading school of thought on sustainable community planning, New Urbanism or Neo-Traditionalism, encourages compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods where accessibility, diversity and a strong sense of community are defining features. Promising approaches for increasing densities include the use of smaller lots, narrower road right-of-ways, less prominent garages, alternative housing typologies and alternative development standards.

Personal benefits stronger motivators than environmental considerations

Common motivators for adopting sustainable alternatives include (listed in order of likely importance):

- price—past research suggests that one should "let price do the talking" (Cost savings for compact developments can be as high as $10,000 per home, even higher where higher-priced land is involved.);
- affordability—the principal driving force of initiatives undertaken to date has been the ability to afford current standards ("Buyers don't buy because its different but because its affordable.");
- integration with surrounding homes, favourable street presence, quality of design and community identity;
- nearby shopping and community services such as daycare and community centres;
- reduced commute times, less distance between work and home;
- better public transportation;
- health and safety—regarding pesticide use and possibly reduced speeding associated with smaller road widths;
- low-maintenance—for alternative landscaping and housing forms; and
- "preserving the environment" for future generations.

Obstacles discourage people

Key barriers to trying more sustainable alternatives include:

- unavailability/poor availability of appealing housing alternatives;
- desires for larger homes, with more ground space and lush green, weed-free lawns, located outside the inner-city;
- beliefs that transportation development is required for economic expansion;
- concerns that higher-density developments are synonymous with lower-quality homes in noisier, less-desirable neighbourhoods, with reduced privacy and individual autonomy (this can be, to some degree, rectified using visually pleasing natural amenities such as generous tree-lined streets and parks);
- a concern that higher density developments reduce nearby property values;

- a concern that higher density developments lead to parking problems (although this need not be the case);
- concerns about locating residential and commercial uses close to one another and of mixing residents of different social status;
- concerns about "what the neighbours will think" (particularly regarding alternative landscapes);
- a belief that the health/environmental effects of pesticide use are still controversial; and
- fear of failure, particularly, that alternative landscaping methods won't produce satisfactory results.

Potential target audiences

Conventional neighbourhoods have been planned around the wants and needs of the traditional nuclear family consisting of two parents with children. However, the traditional family represents only 14 per cent of young Canadian families. Families are getting smaller, and an increasing number of people live alone.

Early adopters of sustainable planning options would likely include:

- childless married couples;
- lone parents;
- empty nesters;
- singles;
- seniors (dramatically growing in number, and increasingly choosing to live independently from their children);
- people with a disability; and
- entry-level and first-time homebuyers.

3. IN-DEPTH EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Background

Telephone interviews were conducted with:

- Mary Anne Beavis, Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg;
- David Bruce, Rural and Small Towns Research Program, Mount Allison University;
- Carol Christensen, Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton;
- Michel Girard, City of Montréal;
- Mike Harcourt, Sustainable Development Research Institute, University of British Columbia; and
- Robin White, City of Calgary.

Key Findings

Mixed use, compact and more affordable

According to these experts, the most promising aspects of sustainable community planning, in terms of potential impact and consumer acceptance include:

- more compact and, therefore, more affordable housing;
- alternative housing forms which increase flexibility and appeal to a wider range of demographics;
- mixed-use communities which offer more convenient access to work, shopping and other destinations and which, therefore, reduce commuting time and the dependence on cars; and
- sustainable landscaping practices that reduce maintenance requirements.

Canadians care, but are unaware and slow to act

There was consensus among the experts that Canadians generally don't know what sustainable community planning is, although many people are familiar with some of its components, such as alternative forms of transportation and working from home. Canadian consumers care about sustainability, but won't take action if they are inconvenienced or have to pay more. They don't understand the choices available and the implications of these choices.

Affordability and convenience stronger motivators than environmental considerations

Common motivators for adopting sustainable alternatives include (listed in order of likely importance):

- affordability—people are more willing to accept the alternatives if they cost significantly less or make desired housing features more affordable;
- convenience—people like living nearer to work, family, friends and shopping;
- low maintenance (e.g., low-care landscapes, multi-family dwellings);
- "preserving the environment" for future generations;
- increased sense of community; and
- avoiding high crime and other social problems associated with traditional urban planning.

Obstacles discourage people

Key barriers to trying alternatives include:

- unavailability/poor availability of appealing alternatives;
- concern about resale/rental values and "what the neighbours might think";
- inertia;
- status and popular ideals associated with the extensive use of cars and "a bigger and better house than my parents had" on a large lot in the suburbs;
- government subsidies supporting cars and urban sprawl;
- lack of awareness of how sustainable systems could work;

- lack of strong leadership in this area (e.g., as with reducing the national debt);
- few visible models to emulate;
- histories of development conflict, which might make a community more resistant to trying new alternatives; and
- a preference among seniors to live in their existing homes.

Potential target audiences

Early adopters of sustainable planning options would likely include:

- those about to move to a new home or who have just moved;
- people about to build or renovate their homes;
- those with a high level of environmental awareness and a desire to preserve the environment— those who enjoy outdoor recreation, naturalists, environmentalists;
- people with low income (attracted by increased affordability);
- high-income, highly educated professionals;
- those who work in the inner city;
- empty nesters, singles, lone parents;
- those about to retire or just retired;
- parents with school children who serve as catalysts for the family; and
- women.

Opinion leaders and influencers

The experts were unanimous in suggesting that the mass media, service clubs, environmental groups and community-based organizations could play key roles in distributing information to the public and in influencing them. Municipal government leaders were considered key opinion leaders in larger cities, but not in small towns and rural areas.

Other potentially important intermediaries include planners, developers, builders, building engineers, realtors, academics involved with their local communities, planning associations, real estate boards, urban development institutes, teachers and municipal planning departments.

Consumers need vivid models of desirable alternatives

The greatest areas of opportunity for informing the public about desirable alternatives were described as:

- demonstration communities with related media coverage including a cluster development in a small rural community;
- a travelling road show with a relatively large scale model that people could visually interact with, something like the CMHC Healthy House display but showing sustainability at the neighbourhood level and how it might look;
- a slide presentation that groups could customize with their own local information and examples, for presentation at meetings and other gatherings, showing appealing models of sustainable planning alternatives (e.g., housing forms, landscape choices);
- a comprehensive community education program including a component focussing on high school children and their families;
- content linked to actions that bring immediate personal benefits;
- content linked to areas people are already passionate about, for example, global warming and climate change which continue to enjoy tremendous public and political interest (most of the climate change issues relate to urban transportation and space heating); and
- information materials produced and distributed in partnership with other organizations playing leadership roles in promoting sustainable communities.

4. BRAINSTORMING SESSION

Background

A full-day brainstorming session was held with housing and community planning researchers on March 16, 1998 at CMHC National Office. The group decided to focus on four priority topic areas:

- compact communities;
- mixed-use communities;
- sustainable transportation; and
- sustainable landscaping.

Goals, Target Audiences, Likely Motivators and Obstacles

This section outlines, for each of these topic areas:

- the agreed upon goals and target audiences; and
- likely motivators and obstacles, suggested by the research to date, that were presented at the session.

Compact communities

Goal: To make Canadians more aware of, and knowledgeable about, the benefits of living in a community with:

- narrower streets;
- smaller homes;
- smaller lots; and
- a greater variety of home types and sizes.

Target market: Move-down buyers (seniors and empty nesters) and first-time buyers.

Secondary market: Lone parents, couples with no children.

Key motivators to touch on likely include:

- affordability—price and possibly avoiding lower taxes from reduced infrastructure requirements;
- convenience—shorter distances to travel, and reduced maintenance requirements;
- safety—possibly reduced car speeds;
- concern for future generations; and
- sense of community.

Key obstacles to address likely include:

- concern about resale/rental values;
- status/popular ideals;
- the idea that such places are less desirable and are unsuitable for children; and
- preferences among seniors to stay in their existing (long-time) homes.

Mixed-use communities

Goal: To increase the proportion of Canadians who buy or rent their homes in mixed-use communities.

Target market: Canadians considering or about to move.

Secondary market: Self-employed/home-based professionals, and the owners and staff of community businesses.

Key motivators to touch on likely include (note that most are lifestyle-related):

- convenience, independence—shorter distances to travel;
- costs—transportation costs, possibly lower taxes;
- health/active living associated with more attractive opportunities for walking and biking to destinations; and
- sense of community.

Key obstacles to address likely include:

- concern about resale/rental values;
- status/popular ideals;
- the idea that such communities are less desirable and are unsuitable for children; and
- preferences among seniors to stay in their existing (long-time) homes.

Sustainable transportation

Goal: To increase the proportion of Canadians who take transportation-related issues into account when deciding where to live.

Target market: Canadians considering or planning to move.

Secondary market: Adults with no children at home.

Key motivators to touch on likely include:

- convenience;
- independence;
- dollars saved;
- resale/rental values and appeal;
- concern for future generations; and
- health/active living.

Key obstacles to address likely include:

- lack of awareness and knowledge of the trade-offs;
- a corresponding belief that the costs are insignificant; and
- status/popular ideals.

Sustainable landscaping

Goal: To increase the proportion of Canadians practising sustainable landscaping techniques. The short-term focus will be on engaging consumers to practise more sustainable ways of doing *what they are already doing* (e.g., use of locally hardy plants).

Target market: Homeowners who landscape and do home maintenance.

Secondary market: Adults with no children, condominium associations.

Key motivators to touch on likely include:

- low maintenance requirements (reduced time and cost);
- attracting wildlife (particularly birds);
- dollars saved (e.g., on watering and mowing);
- health concerns regarding pesticide use (particularly regarding children);
- increased comfort (e.g., shade tree planting); and
- a concern for future generations.

Key obstacles to address likely include:

- status/popular ideals associated with traditional lawns and landscapes;
- confusion over claims made by suppliers (e.g., use of terms such as "organic," "environmentally friendly" and "biodegradable");
- inconvenience of identifying alternatives and knowing how to use them;
- any additional time requirements;
- concerns about possible failure of alternatives to produce acceptable results;
- concerns over what neighbours might think, community norms, few good models;
- concerns about resale/rental values and appeal;
- higher cost of some alternatives; and
- a belief that the health risks associated with pesticide use are controversial.

After determining the priorities and audiences, the group also developed five potential information products to test with consumers and potential partners/client.[1]

5. CONSUMER FOCUS GROUPS

Background

In total, 12 focus groups were held with two previously identified priority groups of consumers—nine groups with people considering or planning to move and three with people who landscape and do home yard maintenance on a regular basis. The recruitment specifications and discussion guide for the groups are included in the appendices.

The key objectives of the focus groups were:

- to gauge responses to, and interest in, the five information material concepts relating to sustainable community development; and
- to explore perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the general subject of sustainable community development.

Key Findings

Housing-related development

Consumers identify a range of important issues relating to housing-related development in and around their communities. Though there is no single dominant issue, the focus groups suggest quite strongly held opinions about each of the following.

Increased density
"Overcrowding," "acres of condos...too close together," "thousands of people grouped into a small area...we'll have ghettos in the future," "too many small lots," "houses are too close."

Increased density was among the most often mentioned issues, with a number of suburban and rural participants citing it as a primary reason for having moved from an urban destination.

Impact on privacy
"[In a condo] you can hear the person next door flip on the light switch." "There's not enough space between the homes...you don't want to look into your neighbour's window."

Tied to perceptions of increased density was a concern about the infringement of one's privacy.

Traffic-related concerns
Issues included greater automobile congestion and the resulting impact on commuting times, less available parking, increased noise and pollution, and more crowded (or insufficient) public transit.

Cost-related concerns
People worried about the rising costs of housing, increasing taxes/decreasing services, the lack of/need for more affordable, decent housing.

Neighbourhood "mix"
Consumers hold particularly strong and differing opinions on the mix of residents (incomes, ages, ethnicity, etc.) and mix of housing types in their communities. Regarding architectural integrity, they want houses and businesses that are appropriately designed, aesthetically pleasing and fit within the established character of their communities—without looking all the same.

Access to shared community resources
Many participants expressed a strong desire for more green spaces, parks, community centres and schools that would be priorities for the community, not an afterthought.

Convenience
Enhanced access to services and amenities within a community is somewhat of a double-edged sword: consumers generally want the convenience of having these close by, but worry about the impact they will have on the community (a perception of more traffic, noise, crime, pollution and so forth).

As the above list makes obvious, consumers' core housing-related perceptions and attitudes present both challenges (e.g., concerns about increased density) and opportunities (e.g., traffic- and cost-

related concerns) for sustainable community development.

Of interest, urban sprawl was rarely mentioned as a top-of-mind housing development-related issue. In fact, on prompting, it became obvious that many participants were unfamiliar with the term. Though urban sprawl is generally acknowledged to be an issue, it is not, on balance, perceived to be a large or immediately pressing one. Many see it as a natural part of healthy economic development and growth. ("It's great that people are spreading out—there's lots of land." "It's [urban sprawl] a good thing...creates more opportunities for people.") Simply put, urban sprawl is often viewed as a somewhat unfortunate, but inevitable consequence of growth.

Moreover, there was relatively little comment about the environmental impact of housing-related development. This suggests that *the ecological or environmental dimensions of community development are not immediately obvious* to people. This is an important finding given that (as discussed later) *environmental considerations do matter to consumers*. It will be important to help people see the linkages between housing-related choices and their impact on the environment.

Sustainable community development and sustainable landscaping

Not surprisingly, most participants across all the groups had never heard of either sustainable community development or sustainable landscaping. For many, the terms are devoid of meaning. ("Lacks real meaning." "Could mean just about anything.") A number of participants could not even hazard a guess about what the terms might mean. Despite this readily apparent lack of clarity, some participants offered guesses as to the meanings of the two terms that were quite accurate or at least in the general ballpark.

Sustainable community development
Definitions/associations include:

- not growing faster than resources can be renewed/balance between growth and resource use/using resources without waste;
- people living and working together in an area with both houses and businesses;
- a mix of houses and apartments (to accommodate a range of lifestyles and life cycles);
- like a village ("where everything you need is right there...parks, schools, shops");
- a responsible, planned and organized approach to developing communities (number and types of houses, schools, parks, stores, hospitals, etc.); and
- better public transportation/less pollution.

The word "self" (as in "self-sufficiency," "self-reliance," "self-supporting," "self-contained" and "self-sustaining") was mentioned often in people's attempts to define this term.

However, the term also had a number of negative connotations. Sustainable community development was variously referred to as sounding "threatening," "controlling" and as being suggestive of a community that would be more like "a compound" than a neighbourhood. In addition, a number of participants associate the term with economic growth rather than environmental considerations.

Sustainable landscaping
Definitions/associations include:

- areas requiring little to no maintenance—alternatives to grass including rocks, rock gardens and the use of hardy plants ("Doesn't need work...it takes care of itself." "Doesn't need a lot of maintenance, fertilizers and people power.");
- planned landscapes using trees and other plants that will do well in the habitat;
- conservation/preservation of land and resources (trees, greenbelts, wetlands);
- balance between green areas, housing and business;

- "not disrupting the natural fabric/shape of the land—working with the earth's contours and peaks";
- composting, crop rotation, achieving ecological balance; and
- keeping things in their natural state or natural regeneration.

It should be noted that most of the more accurate definitions and associations came from those participants who are active gardeners. Though sustainable landscaping is generally perceived to be a benign term, some participants thought it involved negative connotations such as restrictions on yard maintenance. This was most pronounced in the Calgary and environs groups.

A number of participants said that landscape-related products should not try to get people—at least initially—to make radical changes to their existing landscapes. To do so will likely alienate a number of consumers who might have been receptive to making incremental changes. As one participant put it: "I'm not going to dig everything up and start again."

Regarding landscaping information, the following were identified as the issue areas that participants would be most interested in reading about:

- cost;
- amount of work and time required;
- the length of time to maturity of plants used;
- rationale for plant usage and design decisions; and
- personal and societal benefits of the approach used.

Societal appeal versus personal preference

Near the middle of the focus group sessions, participants were given a 10-minute presentation on sustainable community planning, which was prepared by CMHC. Many participants find the concept (as described) to be an intriguing one. Most consumers, particularly urban dwellers, like at least some of the elements of sustainable communities, though very few buy in to the complete package of all the elements. Typically, participants would say things such as: "I like the idea of transportation alternatives to the car, but I would not want to live on a small lot." "I like the idea of living in a mixed-use community with more green spaces and parks, but would not want to live near higher density housing."

Still, there is considerable conceptual buy-in to the idea of sustainable community development in terms of the social benefits of this approach. As one participant put it: "We know that large single dwellings are not a good ethical choice." However, the personal benefits are far less clear. In fact, many consumers believe they would be (or already are) much better off personally living in areas with larger houses, larger lots and lower densities. Rural residents are particularly adamant about this. Simply put, many consumers are saying that though sustainable communities may be right for society, they are wrong for them given their personal needs and preferences.

There was widespread agreement that sustainable communities may be more appealing to groups at different stages of their life cycles. Older participants who are potential move-down buyers (empty nesters, single seniors) were particularly positive about the concept. Many among this group cited increased convenience as a key factor: no/less snow to shovel, less time spent on grounds maintenance, less inside cleaning, ease of getting to destinations and so forth.

Strengths and weaknesses

The following perceived strengths and weaknesses of sustainable communities were identified.

Strengths

- Protection of the environment (less pollution, conservation of resources, less use of harmful chemicals);
- emphasis on transportation alternatives (better public transit, more and better places to walk/bike, less traffic/reducing the need for automobile use);
- *potentially* (consumers are quite sceptical of this) lower cost housing and lower taxes;

- increased accessibility to various things (by bringing better integrated businesses, services and amenities into the community);
- increased convenience (easier lot and home maintenance);
- increased opportunities for recreation (more green spaces and parks); and
- greater community interaction and dialogue with neighbours (see also Weaknesses, below).

Weaknesses

- Impact on automobile transportation (a perception that congestion would increase, making travelling by car even more difficult than it already is—"too anti-car");
- impact on privacy and "breathing space"—too compact, too much density, too crowded, too close, too congested, too confining ("not enough elbow-room," "will increase pressure and tension");
- impact on quality of life (more noise, pollution, garbage, crime);
- visually unattractive (businesses, high rises and townhouses are often perceived as "ruining" the look of a community);
- runs counter to the needs of families (i.e., those with children) who are perceived to need lots of room and space (bad for kids who need room to play in safe environments, kids should not be exposed to high density "ghettoes");
- runs counter to deeply ingrained personal hopes and aspirations ("I want a big house with a big lot." "You're messing with people's dreams." "This challenges what I want as a human being.");
- less community interaction and dialogue with neighbours (people will become colder and less friendly); and
- no compelling need ("Why would we, in Canada, be concerned about living space?" "Why can't we have bigger lots?").

Responses to three scenarios

Three sustainable community planning-related scenarios were developed for use within the focus groups. In each group, participants were exposed to two scenarios (on a rotating basis). The scenarios and responses to them are documented below.

Generally, participant responses serve to reinforce the perceived strengths and weaknesses associated with sustainable communities as described above. The predominantly negative, or at best mixed, response to each scenario suggests considerable opposition to changes with a perceived (detrimental) direct personal impact. Consumers typically do not like development-related "surprises." As one participant put it: "You buy [your house] on the assumption that the neighbourhood will never change."

Scenario A

Let's say you lived in a community that, for years, had a fairly large vacant lot in the middle of it. It wasn't a park or a green space, it was just a large tract of dirt and grass. And let's say you heard that there was a plan to put a small plaza on that spot. It would include things like a dry cleaners, convenience store, bakery and professional services of one kind or another (doctor/dentist/lawyer/accountant/ chiropractor/etc.).

Overall, participants were quite negatively disposed to the building of the small plaza. Opposition was greatest among suburban respondents from across the country.

The minority who responded positively to the prospect of the small plaza tended to see it as:

- increasing convenience (easier access to desirable services that would be within walking distance, assuming they were not already);
- reducing traffic and encouraging more walking/cycling (therefore, reducing automobile congestion, and traffic-related pollution and resource use);
- benefiting the community through the payment of additional business property taxes; and
- encouraging greater dialogue and interaction among neighbours.

However, even this group was only comfortable with the building of the plaza "as long as it's not next door." This group seemed to be saying that they wanted the plaza to be close by, but not too close. ("I wouldn't want to live beside it.")

Most of those responding negatively to the prospect of the small plaza tended to see it as:

- producing more traffic (thereby reducing road safety) and parking problems;
- contributing to crime (theft, vandalism, graffiti, etc.) and other undesirable occurrences ("teenagers hanging out," "lots of noise");
- increasing the amount of litter in the neighbourhood; and
- upsetting the balance of the community and contributing to a less aesthetically pleasing look. ("It's [the plaza] not in character with the neighbourhood." "It [the plaza] would lead to commercialization of the neighbourhood.")

Scenario B

Let's say you lived in a community with older, larger houses on fair-sized lots and one of these older houses was being torn down to make way for a four-story, 16-unit condominium apartment building.

Opposition to the building of the condo was high across all the groups, likely because very few participants could see any personal benefit in the proposal. The few participants who were somewhat supportive of the idea were those who thought they might be interested in moving into a building of this type (typically older, move-down buyers, singles or couples without children). Few participants could identify any other compelling reasons for wanting the building in their neighbourhood.

Most of those who responded negatively to the prospect of the condo tended to see it as:

- producing more traffic (thereby reducing road safety) and contributing to parking problems;
- an ominous forewarning of more condos to come ("the thin edge of the wedge");
- making the community less visually appealing ("It destroys the look of the neighbourhood." "It's not in keeping with the character of the neighbourhood.");
- contributing to an unwanted and undesirable increase in population density and attendant fears about the kinds of people who might "invade" the neighbourhood (variously referred to as: "foreigners," "apartment lowlifes," "undesirables," "bad people," "transients" and "lower class");
- placing an inordinate strain on existing infrastructure and services (water mains, sewage, etc.);
- decreasing privacy and increasing crime and noise; and
- contributing to a likely decrease in community property values.

On balance, the building of the condo is viewed as something not to be embraced but, at best, accepted or, at worst, tolerated.

Scenario C

Let's say your next door neighbour decided to have a wildflower landscape in the front yard, that is, replacing the entire front yard with a combination of flowers and tall grasses that would be allowed to grow to a metre in height, but that would be nicely contained by clean edges all around.

More than any other, this scenario produced a split in opinion across most groups with opposition to the wildflower landscape being somewhat more pronounced among suburban residents. Avid gardeners, on the other hand, were among the most accepting of the wildflower landscape.

Those responding positively to the wildflower landscape tended to see it as:

- introducing a visually interesting element to the community ("a talking point," "looks good...catches your eye");
- offering a low maintenance alternative to lawns;
- increasing property values (assuming the landscape is well maintained); and

- being a sign of community tolerance and respect for diversity.

Those responding negatively to the wildflower landscape tended to see it as:

- community eyesore ("it would look out of place," "looks trashy," "wild little jungle," "look at the mess in the yard");
- contributing to health problems of others in the community (by aggravating the allergies of neighbours);
- creating more work for neighbours given the perception of widespread wildflower seed dispersal ("I'd have to build a four-metre wall around my yard."); and
- decreasing property values (even if the landscape is well maintained).

Consumer viewpoints

When consumers try to define or describe sustainable communities they typically do so in one of three ways, according to participants' responses both before and after they had heard CMHC's description.

By the attributes of this type of community
- Smaller lot sizes;
- compact house forms;
- higher density ("building up instead of out," "cramming more people in a smaller place");
- narrower roads;
- mixed use;
- greater emphasis on transportation alternatives to the automobile; and
- more environmentally "friendly" gardening and landscaping practices.

These attributes are used primarily as descriptors and can be cast in both positive and negative lights depending on the consumer's own personal bias.

By the potential impact on community spirit and way of life
- People looking after individuals in the community";
- "small town atmosphere";
- "comfortable community living";
- "sense of comfort";
- a place you can stay in for life" (a mix of different people—ages, backgrounds, life situations, etc.);
- "closer knit, friendly"; and
- "a neighbourhood, not just a place." Participants who define the term this way typically do so using positive phraseology.

By personal and societal benefits
- Environmentally friendly—conservation of land and resources;
- affordable housing, lower taxes;
- convenience and accessibility (reduced work, access to various amenities); and
- enhanced safety.

Of these three, the latter two appear to have the greater resonance. This suggests strongly that sustainable community development should not simply be defined by its attributes or component parts, but rather that the definition hold out the promise of what these communities can deliver on a human scale.

In describing and thinking about sustainable community development, the notion of a village is very strong for consumers. In fact, many say that the word "village" is an accurate descriptor. Moreover, villages tend to have very positive connotations for people: "a community with dignity," "a well functioning community," "a community that is all within itself," "a community with everything in it"). Sustainable communities were variously described as a "bunch of little villages in a big city" and as "putting neighbourhoods and villages back into cities."

Variations in response across urban, suburban and rural consumer segments

Though not overly pronounced, the following variations in response to sustainable community development were identified across urban, suburban and rural consumer segments.

- Consumers living in urban areas are typically more positively disposed to the full package

of attributes embodied in the term sustainable community. Consumers living in the suburbs typically react the most negatively. Those living in more rural areas are, generally, somewhere in between. (This group tends to view sustainable communities as less relevant and less of an option to them.)

- Consumers living in the suburbs and rural areas are strongly opposed to the idea of living in smaller houses, on smaller lots, in higher-density areas. They are more likely than their urban counterparts to see drawbacks to this (less privacy, more crime, etc.) and less likely to see benefits (convenience, access to services and so forth). Some people living in the suburbs and in rural areas have moved to these areas to avoid some of the tenets of sustainable communities. For this group, the idea of living in smaller houses, on smaller lots and in higher-density areas runs directly counter to their personal ideals and aspirations. The greatest resistance to embracing sustainable communities will likely come from within this segment of consumers.

- Depending on where one lives, consumers tended to place differing emphasis on the individual facets of sustainable communities. Those in rural areas typically say that issues relating to transportation, crime and urban sprawl are less important, while those living in a suburban/urban context are likely to say these issues are more important.

- Generally, respondents in Calgary and environs were more critical of the sustainable community concept than others. Consumers in these groups were more likely to view sustainable community development as a threat to personal choice and freedom, and as suggestive of a community that would be more like "a compound" than a neighbourhood.

- No discernible differences were evident in urban, suburban and rural consumer perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the idea of sustainable landscaping.

Important communications vehicles and messages for information products

The focus groups helped to highlight the importance of two promotion and distribution methods: the Internet and community newspapers. Participants in almost every group asked whether it would be possible (if not preferable) to deliver the proposed sustainable community development-related materials through the Internet. Though information materials usually cannot be placed exclusively on the Web—given that a sizable portion of the public, including some key audiences such as older Canadians, are not "on-line"—Web-based versions should be given full consideration. Community newspapers were often identified as an important source of information about local affairs. The degree to which they were identified as a potential means of promotion and distribution was quite significant.

Consumers responded well to tools that would assist them in making decisions, such as checklists and lists of key issues to consider or questions to ask. There was general consensus that this approach would help people to think in new ways about key issues and ask critical questions that otherwise might not have occurred to them. To this end, a number of participants suggested including "what if" or "did you know" scenarios that might be used to challenge people to think outside of their typical views.

Participants seemed most interested in four issue areas:

- affordability (housing costs and taxes);
- community interaction which includes privacy, noise, crime, dialogue with neighbours;
- traffic; and
- convenient access to services and amenities, e.g., schools, green space.

This implies the need to focus on the personal implications of sustainable communities, though not excluding the societal implications.

To avoid being "preachy" or guilt-inducing, participants recommended the following.

- Write and design the material in an engaging way that is focussed on the consumer's information agenda.
- Give fair treatment to the complexity of issues and different perspectives ("give me the cons...both sides") and do not be dismissive of opposing points of view. In doing so, give voice to people's concerns, fears and aspirations, helping them to see themselves and their attitudes in the various information materials.
- Position sustainable community development as an alternative to consider. Emphasize choice and options.
- Do not make a one-sided "sales pitch." The information should inform, not cajole.
- Ground the delivery of content in the consumer's perspective. Provide quotes from real people and show that sustainable community development has a basis in the wants and needs of consumers.
- Be truthful and focus on the facts. As one participant put it: "Giving information is not preaching."

6. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH POTENTIAL CLIENTS/PARTNERS

Background

Thirty-three telephone interviews were conducted with potential clients/partners. Such stakeholders can offer powerful mechanisms for disseminating the information and effecting desired changes. A listing of those interviewed is included in Appendix C of this report.

The key objectives of the interviews were to gauge responses to, and interest in, the five potential information product concepts relating to sustainable community development, and to explore client/partnership opportunities.[1]

Key Findings

Consumer receptivity to messages

Generally, respondents believe the timing is right for introducing and promoting the range of topics covered under the umbrella of sustainable community development. Many believe that most people are very receptive to sustainable landscaping messages and at least somewhat receptive to messages regarding compact and mixed-use communities. However, there is general consensus that the manner in which these messages are delivered, that is, word choice, tonality, positioning and key messages, will be crucial. Respondents believe that sustainable community development-related communication should:

- be positive in tone;
- avoid placing a value judgment on choices that people have already made;
- assist consumers to make a gradual transition to more sustainable practices;
- avoid being "preachy" or guilt-inducing (i.e., you're not bad if you use chemicals on your lawn);
- be direct, simple and easy to read; and
- be practical ("avoid being too idealistic").

Though respondents believe the time is right to begin pursuing a sustainable community agenda with the public, they also recognize that a significant challenge lies ahead. A number of respondents referred to various components of sustainable communities (higher density housing, smaller lots and houses, narrower roads, etc.) as a "difficult sell." As one respondent put it, a sizable number of consumers still want "the biggest house possible on the biggest lot." Another referred to consumers as wanting "as much housing as they can buy." Respondents are convinced that significant progress in the area of sustainable communities will take a considerable amount of time, but that now is as good a time as any to start.

There was general acceptance of the importance of reaching people at the right time, that is, the places in their life cycles or life situations where they might be most positively disposed to the sustainable community message. Developers, realtors, builders and municipal officials all noted the importance of reaching the person who is considering or planning to move. As one builder put it: "Our experience is that when people are looking at buying or moving, they are very receptive to these [sustainable community] messages."

In the area of sustainable landscaping, the targeting of gardeners and those who do regular yard maintenance was considered a solid approach. Additionally, a couple of respondents thought it might be a good idea to also target those who are currently using landscaping services to encourage consumers to select more sustainable plans and to landscape in a manner that reduces the need for, or the cost of, such services.

Coming to terms with terms

A number of respondents suggested avoiding words such as "sustainable community" or "sustainable community development/planning."

Similar to findings in the consumer focus groups, the word "village" was often referred to as a reasonable alternative. However, respondents agreed that "village" can mean different things to different people in different areas. There was consensus that the word village in the context of sustainable communities would have to be carefully and clearly defined.

Respondents emphasized that the driving consideration in producing sustainable community-related communication is to make it relevant and understandable. "You can't use technical terms.") As one respondent put it: "Write for the consumer, not the professional." As another respondent said: "You'd need some better terms. My previous life was working in this area. We used the slogan *a clean way to grow*."

The investment factor

A number of builders, developers and realtors say that the degree to which a purchaser of housing views the purchase as an investment is an important factor influencing potential response to more sustainable housing choices. The general sense is that purchasers whose main concern is not investment, will likely be more receptive to less traditional (i.e., more sustainable) housing options. ("Sustainable housing is attractive to some of our buyers...investment is not the primary concern for all of our buyers.") Those whose primary concern is investment, may be somewhat hesitant about purchasing less traditional housing options. ("Our business is reluctant to use these documents because the consumer finds them confusing. They believe they are buying something of less value than the historical value...we try not to be seen as something different.") Respondent comments on this issue suggest that information materials may want to deal with investment and property resale issues to help alleviate buyer's concerns in this area.

The importance of money

A number of respondents cited money as a key issue. Some respondents bemoaned the lack of financial incentives (e.g., tax rebates) or penalties (e.g., higher gasoline taxes, large house/large lot "luxury" taxes and so forth) to get consumers to adopt practices that are more consistent with sustainable communities. This group tends to view consumers as being predominantly driven by economic considerations.

Municipal respondents indicated strong interest in information about general sustainable planning issues, since most of them have not yet had the time and resources to prepare such materials themselves.

Makes issues real and tangible

Issue-related preferences often seemed based on the respondent's geographical location, with respondents in smaller communities saying that issues relating to transportation, crime and urban sprawl are less important, while those in larger, urban centres were more likely to say these issues are more important. Generally, respondents believe that consumers will respond better to transportation-related issues than to urban sprawl. As one respondent put it: "Focus on transportation to and from work. People have had it and are ready for an alternative...they are concerned about the implications of urban sprawl, but they don't really understand it...they do understand commuter times."

This last point speaks to the importance, from the respondents' perspective, of ensuring that material content makes the issues relating to sustainable communities real and tangible for people, with particular emphasis on personal benefits (particularly lower costs, if this can be proven and done in a way that does not "cheapen" the image of the housing). As one respondent put it: "There may be scepticism around what the sustainable alternative might look like. Some real-life examples with pictures could help, particularly with a range of prices."

Respondents were somewhat divided on the extent to which the information material should focus on environmental issues and their implications for society. Some cautioned against making these too strong a focus; others thought

they should be emphasized given consumers' perceived heightened awareness of, and receptivity to, environmental considerations.

Important communication vehicles

Respondents (particularly municipal officials) liked the idea of a tool kit to assist potential partners to develop companion documents. The development of such documents was viewed as an important means of helping make the issues more concrete by providing local, community-specific examples. ("We would likely want to produce a companion piece specific to our communities.") A number of respondents saw value in a product that would assist people in calculating the time and money implications of various housing alternatives.

Participants thought the Web was a particularly convenient and cost-effective manner of providing information. In addition, they were attracted by its potential for offering a wide range of examples enabling them to select those that were most relevant and credible locally. Web site pieces would also allow municipalities, developers, builders, gardeners and so forth to add examples on an ongoing basis. Producing the information as a print publication was also seen as appropriate. This approach would allow for distribution of the information material through a variety of channels and help maximize consumer access.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The Time Is Right

Awareness of sustainable community planning issues is low among consumers. Furthermore, neither the environmental dimension nor the personal benefits of community planning are clear to them. They are generally unaware that a range of sustainable housing options are already available and that they may be practising some aspects of sustainable communities. Many were under the impression that sustainable communities were an all-or-nothing package and that few examples exist. Further, there appears to be a lack of readily available information for consumers on many sustainable community planning issues, and consumers are receptive to receiving more information.

At the same time, many consumers find sustainable community planning to be an intriguing concept. Most, particularly urban dwellers, like at least some of the elements, though very few buy in to the complete package. Further, a range of potential clients and partners generally believe that the time is right for introducing and promoting the range of topics covered under the umbrella of sustainable community planning.

Consumers More Receptive to Some Messages

Of the various sustainable community planning topics, sustainable landscaping sparks consumer interest the most. Not only are consumers particularly receptive to receiving information on this topic, they are also ready to move on it now. Of the issues discussed, consumers appear to be the least receptive to compact communities. For many, it has negative associations, such as increased parking, traffic and noise as well as loss of privacy. Regarding mixed-use communities and sustainable transportation, consumers were attracted to community features that would enable them to drive less and provide greater convenience and accessibility.

In describing sustainable communities, the notion of a village is very strong. In fact, both consumers and potential partners and clients say the word "village" is an accurate descriptor. Moreover, villages tend to have very positive connotations for people. However, there was consensus that the word village in the context of sustainable communities would have to be carefully and clearly defined.

The Importance of the Internet

The importance of the Internet as a means of distributing (and, to some degree, promoting) information was reaffirmed by the research findings. Many consumers and potential partners/clients are very interested in Internet-based information on the concepts that were tested. The development of an Internet-based "case bank" of Canadian sustainable community examples was identified as an important information gap.

Though the Internet is an important tool, it cannot be (nor should it be) the primary means for information distribution. Too few Canadians have easy or regular access to the Internet. There is a significant place for paper-based information materials in any sustainable community communication strategy.

Focus on Livability

Information on this topic should focus on those aspects that make the communities great places to live. Great livability should be the one overriding impression that consumers are left with regarding these communities.

Specifically, the information materials should stress the human dimension of sustainable communities and the potential personal benefits

that resonate most strongly with consumers: community interaction and dialogue with neighbours, access, convenience, safety, affordability, recreational opportunities and so forth. While the twin themes of environmental stewardship and legacy should be clearly addressed in the information materials, they should not be overly emphasized. Rather, they should be woven into and build on this overall message of great livability. Finally, the information materials should also highlight the notion of "options" (and longevity) within the community, that is, that a variety of housing choices are available to accommodate the needs of a range of lifestyles and life cycles.

This over-arching position should be reinforced by the following positioning sub-tenets and related message thrusts.

Positioning sub-tenets and related message thrusts

Positioning Tenet	Message Thrusts
Available	Options that contribute to more sustainable communities are already available in locations across Canada. They have been around for many years and are viable alternatives.
Good for consumers	The personal benefits of sustainable communities are many: • greater convenience/access to shopping, services and amenities; • better public transit; • less need for automobile use, thereby reducing the time and cost of getting around; • affordability (smaller houses and lots); • easier lot and home maintenance; • recreation opportunities (green spaces and parks); and • community interaction and dialogue with neighbours.
Good for society	The choices you make about housing have an impact on the environment. Sustainable communities are environmentally responsible. They are a way of helping you to reduce your impact on the environment. Sustainable communities are a means of preserving the places in which we live for generations to come. Sustainable communities save precious resources. The specific societal benefits are many: • less car use, therefore reduced greenhouse gas emissions, smog and associated health and environmental problems; • more compact housing, which is more energy-, land- and material- efficient; • lower public infrastructure costs; • preservation of land for agriculture, wildlife and recreation; and • broader use of low-maintenance landscaping which reduces the use of water, energy and harmful substances (e.g., fertilizers and pesticides) and increases biodiversity and habitats for wildlife.
Easy to embrace	Sustainable communities are not an "all or nothing" proposition. A range of options is available. You can contribute to sustainable communities in a number of ways, including: • adopting sustainable landscaping practices; • using your car only when you really have to (Walk, bike or use public transportation whenever possible.); • not living in a house or on a lot that's bigger than you really need; and • supporting sustainable community-related changes to your neighbourhood (e.g., in-fill projects).

Appendix A:

Recruiting Specifications for Focus Groups

Twelve focus groups were undertaken in all. Of these, nine were distributed across the country and recruited for as follows.

Those Considering Or Planning To Move

Location/ Residence of Participants	Recruitment Specifications (Ten participants were recruited for each group.)
Vancouver/Urban Calgary/Urban Calgary/Suburban Calgary Environs/Rural Toronto/Suburban Montréal/Urban Montréal/Suburban Halifax/Urban Halifax/Suburban	All participants were: • considering or planning to move within the next two years • neither too pro- nor anti-environment • neither too pro- nor anti-sustainable community development Approximately one half of participants were: • males/females • homeowners/renters One third of all participants were: • potential move-down buyers: empty nesters, single seniors (60+) • first-time buyers: singles, adults without children, lone parents • self-employed, home-based professionals Participants were recruited to ensure a reasonable mix of: • occupations, incomes, education levels, and ages

The remaining three focus groups were held in the locations described below and recruited for as follows.

Those Who Garden and Do Home Yard Maintenance on a Regular Basis

Location/ Residence of Participants	Recruitment Specifications (Ten participants were recruited for each group.)
Vancouver/Suburban Toronto/Urban Halifax Environs/ Rural	All participants were: • not considering or planning to move within the next two years • neither too pro- nor anti-environment • neither too pro- nor anti-sustainable community development • homeowners • living in houses (not apartments) Approximately one-half of participants were: • males/females • active gardeners • not active gardeners, but doing regular yard maintenance Participants were recruited to ensure a reasonable mix of: • occupations, incomes, education levels, and ages

People working in the housing industry (e.g., developers, builders, realtors, CMHC staff, etc.) were ineligible to participate in the focus groups.

Each group was scheduled for two hours. A $40 incentive was provided to focus group participants.

Appendix B:

Discussion Guide for Focus Groups

I. Introduction (7 min.)

1. Standard overview of focus group procedures.

II. Housing-Related Development in Context (8 min.)

2. When you think about housing-related development in and around your community (or the city of [insert] as a whole), what do you tend to think of?

3. What are the big or important issues? (IF NECESSARY, PROBE: urban sprawl/land use... transportation... cost... density... etc.)

III. Familiarity with and Understanding of Key Terms and Concepts (10 min.)

4. Have you ever heard of the term "sustainable community development"? When you hear this term what do you think of?

5. Have you ever heard of the term "sustainable landscaping"? When you hear this term what do you think of?

IV. Reactions to Sustainable Community Development Scenarios (20 min.)

[Using a "Plus One" technique, Moderator to read two of the scenarios listed below—one at a time—and then ask the following questions]

Scenario A

Let's say you lived in a community that, for years, had a fairly large vacant lot in the middle of it. It wasn't a park or a green space, it was just a large tract of dirt and grass. And let's say you heard that there was a plan to put a small plaza on that spot. It would include things like a dry cleaners, convenience store, bakery and professional services of one kind or another (doctor/dentist/ lawyer/accountant/chiropractor/etc.).

6. How would you feel? What would you think?

7. What impact would this likely have on the community? (Probe property values, crime, traffic, noise, pollution, etc.) What makes you say that?

Scenario B

Let's say you lived in a community with older, larger houses on fair-sized lots and one of these older houses was being torn down to make way for a four-story, 16-unit condominium apartment building.

8. How would you feel? What would you think?

9. What impact would this likely have on the community? (Probe property values, crime, traffic, noise, pollution, etc.) What makes you say that?

Scenario C

Let's say that your next door neighbour decided to have a wildflower landscape in the front yard, that is, replacing the entire front yard with a combination of flowers and tall grasses that would be allowed to grow to a metre in height, but that would be nicely contained by clean edges all around.

10. How would you feel? What would you think?

11. What impact would this likely have on the community? (Probe property values, crime, traffic, noise, pollution, etc.) What makes you say that?

V. Perceptions of, and Attitudes Toward, Sustainable Community Development (15 min.)

[Moderator to provide a brief overview of the key components of a sustainable community development. Presentation/speaking notes to come from CMHC (3-5 min. presentation).]

12. Overall, what do you think of this idea of sustainable community development? What is

it about it that appeals or does not appeal to you? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

13. If sometime tonight or tomorrow you were speaking with a friend about what we've been discussing this evening, how would you, in your own words and as simply as possible, describe sustainable community development?

VI. Exploring Information Needs and Testing Potential CMHC Information Material Concepts (55 min.)

14. Is there any component or aspect of sustainable community development that you would be particularly interested in knowing more about? Please describe.

15. What would you need to know to feel more comfortable with the idea of sustainable community development?

[The following questions will be asked for each of the CMHC information material concepts being tested (Concepts A, B and C will be tested in groups held with those "considering or planning to move" and Concepts D, E and one of A, B or C will be tested in groups with those "who landscape and do home yard maintenance on a regular basis.")]

[Moderator to describe each concept and then ask:]

16. What's your overall reaction to this communication material? Does it sound like a good idea or not? What makes you say that? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

17. On which issues should this communication material focus? What makes you say that?

18. How would you refine or improve this communication material?

19. What's the best way of making you aware of this communication material? How can it be best promoted?

20. What's the best way of distributing the information material, that is, making it available to you? Which approaches are the most convenient and credible?

21. Cards on the table, is this information material worth producing? Would you use it? Is it of value? What makes you say that?

[To be asked after all information material concepts have been discussed:]

22. Most of you have probably seen a lot of information from different levels of government, and you know that sometimes this information comes across as sounding quite "preachy"—that there's only one way of doing something and if you're not doing it that way you should feel guilty. How do we ensure that the information materials we've been discussing are not "preachy" or guilt-inducing? What else should these information materials avoid doing?

[Additional landscaping-specific questions to be asked in the three "gardener-recruited" groups only.]

23. What do you think of this idea of sustainable gardening? What do you like or dislike about it?

24. Do you do it now? Would you do it/or do more of it? What makes you say that?

VII. Revisiting Initial Perceptions and Attitudes (time permitting only)

25. Has our discussion today, influenced in any way, your approach to buying your next home? How so? (Probe: What criteria will you use? What will you focus on? What makes you say that?)

26. Have your views on the different scenarios we discussed earlier (moderator to remind participants of these) changed at all now that you know more about sustainable community development? How so?

27. Have your views of sustainable community development as a whole changed at all? How so?

VIII. Group Wrap-Up (5 min.)

28. Any final thoughts about anything that we've been discussing?

[Moderator to thank all participants and draw the discussion to a close.]

Appendix C:

Potential Clients/Partners Interviewed

Potential Clients/Partners Interviewed

Category	Prov	Potential Client/Partner Interviewed
Developers who have brought infill or compact, mixed-use projects to the market in the past three years.	AB	Suburban—David Harvey, Carma Developers, (403) 231-8900/8956 compact, mixed-use projects to market in the last three years.
	ON	Urban—John Doran, Domicile Construction (613) 241-5894
	NB	Rural—Gary Richards, Atlantic People's Housing Limited (506) 858-6057
Municipalities	BC	Ken Cameron, Manager, Strategic Planning Department, the Greater Vancouver Regional District
	AB	Robin White, Planning Department, Calgary (403) 268-5630
	NB	Ken Stevens, Director, Greater Moncton Planning District Commission
	ON	Bill Pearce, Director of Strategic Planning, Hamilton-Wentworth (905) 546-4178
	ON	Martha Robinson, Health Department, Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (613) 724-4122 x 3558
	NB	Armand Robichaud, Director, BeauBassin Planning Commission (506) 577-2040
	—	Louise Comeau, Manager, Community Energy Opportunities, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (613) 241-8484
Major retailers of landscaping plants and supplies, and their associations	ON	Tony DiGiovanni, Landscape Ontario (905) 875-1905
	QC	Nathalie Gaudette, Fédération Interdisciplinaire de l'horticulture ornemental de Québec (FIHOQ) (418) 659-3561
	—	Grant Cavin, Environment and Product Safety Advisor, Canadian Tire
	—	Kink Woodbury, Manager of Environmental Programs, Home Depot 1 800 654-0688
	ON/QC	Karl Stensson, VP Retail, Sheridan Nurseries 1 888 676-2020
Other government departments, agencies and programs with focus on related issues	—	Pat Dolan, Director, EcoAction 2000, Environment Canada (613) 953-4950
	—	Debbie Holbrook, Health Canada (613) 941-3974
	—	Steve Grundy, Go for Green! (613) 562-5309
	—	Barbara Mullally-Pauly, Chief, Residential Programs, Natural Resources Canada (613) 995-2945
	QC	David Belgue, Ministère de la Métropole (418) 691-2004
	BC	Eric Carlson, Director, Special Projects, British Columbia Ministry of Municipal Affairs (250) 387-4040
Realtors and their associations	BC	Doug Elliot, Royal LePage, Vancouver
	MB	Peter Squire, Director of Public Affairs, Winnipeg Real Estate Association (204) 786-8854
	—	Gary Simonson, Canadian Real Estate Association (613) 237-7111
Media	—	Rebecca Fox, Editor, Canadian Gardening (905) 475-8440 x 136
	—	Tom Cruikshank, Editor, Harrowsmith Magazine (514) 327-4464
	ON	Sal Bommarito, Managing Editor, Guardian Newspaper, Etobicoke
Consumer/environmental advocacy groups with focus on related issues	—	Beatrice Olivastri, Executive Director, Friends of the Earth (613) 241-0085
	—	Ron Nielson, Pollution Probe (416) 327-7029
Environment/health catalysts	—	Dave McLeod, the Green Communities Association (705) 742-2659
	—	Augusto Mathias, the Healthy Communities Network, Ontario/Ontario Public Health Association (416) 392-1087
CMHC insurance products	—	Paul Poliquin, Manager, Business Development (613) 748-2350
	—	Ken Brinston, Insurance Marketing (613) 748-2973
Total number of interviews	33	

Appendix D:

Discussion Guide for Interviews

Discussion Guide

The following is the proposed discussion guide for these interviews. This guide would be sent to participants before the interview, along with the information material descriptions and some introductory materials (those used with the initial expert interviews.)

I. Introduction, Thanks for Participating

II. Selection of Relevant Information Materials

1. You have received five ideas for information materials that CMHC is considering producing. Which are most relevant to your organization? Why is that the case?

2. Are there any related topics that your organization needs or wants to have covered, but that are not being well communicated to consumers at this time?

III. General Impressions and Interest in Each Selected Information Material

The following questions will be asked for each of the CMHC information materials mentioned in response to question 1. If more than three are mentioned, ask them to choose the three most relevant ones.)

3. What is your initial reaction to the information material? Does it seem like a good idea or not? What makes you say that? What are its strengths and its weaknesses?

4. If CMHC were to produce this piece they are thinking of targeting (read appropriate description of target audience) . Does this make sense to you? Are there any other groups of consumers you think should be targeted?

5. On which specific issues should this information material focus? Which ones should it avoid? What makes you say that?

6. How receptive to you think these people will be to the messages?

7. From your experience, what types of related messages, issues and topic areas have been most successful with consumers in the past?

8. Do you have any other thoughts about how to focus and improve on this information material idea?

9. If CMHC were to go ahead with this information material idea, it is thinking of doing so in the following way (read appropriate description of format). Does this make sense to you? Are there any other formats they should consider?

10. What's the best way of promoting the information material to the targeted consumers? Of distributing it? Which approaches would be most convenient and/or credible?

11. How might your organization benefit from the piece?

12. What role might your organization want to play in helping to fund, promote and distribute the information material? (Probe for financial contributions and specific logistics.)

13. What would your organization need from CMHC in order to get involved?

14. What factors might discourage your organization from becoming involved?

15. Can you think of any other organizations that might be interested in becoming involved?

Perceptions and Expectations of Partnering with CMHC

16. What experience has your organization had to date with cooperative projects of this sort?

17. Are there areas of concern or caution that your organization might have regarding such

partnerships in general? (If necessary, probe CMHC's reputation and image.)

18. If applicable: Earlier on, you mentioned that your organization might be interested in (role mentioned earlier). Would you be interested in us or someone from CMHC calling you back to explore this further?

Wrap-Up

19. Any final thoughts about anything we've been discussing?

Thanks for participating

Appendix E:

Additional Resources Identified

Potential Clients/Partners Interviewed

Resource	Available from
Alternative Design Standards: materials from a workshop organized by the BC Real Estate Board. It took a suburban site with alternative design standards and one with regular treatment. Also one urban site. At the workshop, the Board worked with the real estate industry to see what the blocks were to developing and marketing alternative standards. Loss of salmon habitat in B.C. is a hot issue, and is largely due to paving over of stream sources i.e., urban development. Looking at how to design and sell alternatives.	The report will be available from Patrick Condon pcon@unixg.ubc.ca.
What types of mixed-use businesses are objectionable, and what types are not (rural New Brunswick)? "There is resistance to corner stores, gas stations and so on, but not so much to carpentry shops, art galleries, bed and breakfasts, summer produce markets and so on. We have researched this in developing our rural plans."	BeauBassin Planning Commission Armand Robichaud, Director (506) 577-2040
The Skills Development Program for Sustainable Transportation (Toronto) has developed a slide bank/library related to urban density and transportation. All the slides are indexed and have accompanying text. They have trained some volunteers to present their presentations.	Gillian Kranias at (416) 504-3934.
Video called "A Message From the Future," with definitions of sustainable development.	Sustainable Development Coordination Unit for Manitoba (204) 945-1124
Video called "Cities in Balance." It starts off with a shot of a narrator—a senior citizen describing how the city has changed,. Describes the negative sides of auto-dependent living, then talks about what other cities are doing and how they are much more liveable.	City of San Diego
Information on health effects. Trevor Hancock is doing a study for Health Canada on health and the built environment. Another study was done by David Sherwood on the built environment in "Human Health and the Environment," prepared for Environment Canada at the end of the Green Plan.	
Naturescape series. About caring for wildlife habitat in your home. For B.C., jointly produced by Wildlife Canada, Environment Canada, B.C. Ministry of the Environment. Aimed at the human level—kids and neighbours—well illustrated, with posters and other accessory pieces.	1 800 387-9853
Canadian Gardening Magazine, particularly the June/July 1998 issue, which has an 8-10 page spread of case studies of homeowners who have replaced front lawns with gardens.	*Canadian Gardening* Rebecca Fox, Editor (905) 475-8440 x 136
The video "Florida Yards and Neighbourhoods—Reclaiming Paradise".	Call 941 742-5986 or (941) 316-1000 to get a copy

1 The descriptions of the concepts and the results of the testing of these concepts are not included in this study.